

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-6410



August 2, 1985

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 1-61-85

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY COUNSELS

SUBJECT: FOSTER CARE CHILDREN AND SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION LAW REQUIREMENTS

A frequently occurring problem has been brought to our attention regarding children in foster care attempting to register in a new school and not having immediate access to their immunization records. Without the immunization records the child cannot meet the school entry requirements and will not be admitted.

To resolve this problem the State Department of Health Services (DHS) has proposed the three alternative solutions described below.

Suggested Plan to Facilitate Foster Child School Registration

Alternative One

As a matter of county agency policy, routinely immunize all foster children at the facility where they enter the county's system, with one dose each of Td, (tetanus and diphtheria) polio and MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) or MR (measles and rubella) vaccines. This already is the policy in several counties, and it works successfully. Records of these immunizations are maintained by the facility and are available to social worker, school, or foster parent.

With these three immunizations, children are "up-to-date," and the new school can admit them immediately. With the next immunization not due for two months (even if the child had never received any other immunizations), the school has at least 60 days in which to await arrival of the child's cumulative record and California School Immunization Record (PM286) from the previous school. Most likely, when the PM286 arrives, it will indicate no further immunizations are needed.

Should a child reenter the county facility in the future, the immunization record would be on file, and he/she would not need to be reimmunized.

Alternative Two

If such a county-wide policy is not possible, schools can refer all foster children lacking immunization records to the local health department for immunization (again, one dose of Td, polio and MMR or MR). The foster parent or delegated representative of the county can sign the form giving permission for these immunizations. The local health department will provide a personal California Immunization Record (PM298) which can be presented at school to show the child is up-to-date. Again, the school has at least 60 days to await arrival of the child's cumulative record and PM286 from the prior school.

Alternative Three

In smaller counties, the social worker can enlist the assistance of the local health department's immunization coordinator. The immunization coordinator can call the child's former school and obtain by telephone the dates on the child's PM286 or a copy of it to relay to the social worker. (The local health department has legal access to California School Immunization Records.)

Additionally, DHS recommends that social workers routinely keep a copy of a California School Immunization Record (PM286) or California Immunization Record (PM298) in the file of their school-age clients. Should a change in foster placement result in transfer to a different school, the necessary records would then be readily available.

DHS is sending these suggestions to county health departments and urging them to contact their county welfare directors to work out a plan for dealing with this problem. County health departments also will contact local probation departments to work out a similar plan for these children.

If you have questions concerning foster care children and school immunization law requirements please contact your Adult and Family Services Operations Bureau Consultant at (916) 445-0623.


LOREN D. SUTER
Deputy Director
Adult and Family Services Division